CHAPTER 1

Dialogic Interdisciplinary Self-Study Through the Practice of Duoethnography

Richard D. Sawyer and Joe Norris

> Curriculum, from the learner's standpoint, ordinarily represents little more than an arrangement of subjects, a structure of socially prescribed knowledge, or a complex system of meanings which may or may not fall within his grasp. Rarely does it signify possibility for him as an existing person, mainly concerned with making sense of his own life-world. Rarely does it promise occasions for ordering the materials of that world, for imposing "configurations" by means of experiences and perspectives made available for personally conducted cognitive action. Sartre says that "knowing is a moment of *praxis*," opening into "what was not yet been." Preoccupied with priorities, purposes, programs of "intended learning" and intended (or unintended) manipulation, we pay too little attention to the individual in quest of his own future, bent on surpassing what is merely "given," on breaking through the everyday. We are still too prone to dichotomize: to think of "disciplines" or "public traditions" or "accumulated wisdom" or "common culture" (individualization despite) as objectively existent, external to the knower—there to be discovered, mastered, learned. (Greene, 1971, p. 253)

R.D. Sawyer (✉)
Teaching and Learning, Washington State University Vancouver, Vancouver, WA, USA

J. Norris (✉)
Dramatic Arts, Brock University, St Catharines, ON, Canada

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This quote from Maxine Greene, first appearing in print nearly half a century ago, still provides illuminating insight about how we, as educators, think about and experience our practice. While Greene is focusing on the student as learner here, we interpret this quote to include educators as well. And although in this quote she considers curriculum as classroom experience, we consider it in a more expanded way as narrative encounters, both inside and outside school. We also consider practice as a form of curriculum.

Greene's work stands out and gives us hope within a rich scholarship about teaching imagination and possibilities. Among these scholars are Bateson (1989), Palmer (1998) and Vinz (1996) on composing a teaching life; Behar-Horenstein and Morgan (1995) on teaching possibilities; Bradbeer (1998) on mythopoesis; Clandinin and Connelly (1992, 1995) on curriculum and professional knowledge landscapes; Greene on teacher choice, imagination, and personal reality (1991); and Palmer on teaching as a spiritual act (1993), However, a gap exists between this rich scholarship and the daily reality and circumstances of practitioners. Part of the difficulty in acknowledging the complexity of practice may stem from the lack of an inquiry language to access the relationship between self and practice, with the outcomes of a form of inquiry or self-study being an artifact of the method of inquiry.

Approaches that practitioners have used to examine their practice have ranged from action research starting in the 1940s (Lewin, 1948) to participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), to various forms of reflection (Schon, 1983) and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990). More recently, scholars have begun using auto-ethnographies and collaborative-ethnographies (Chang, 2008). The goal for these approaches has often been the improvement of individual and collective practice. The actual *self-study* aspects of these inquiries have been more in the background in the action research studies and in the foreground of the auto-ethnographies, which are often focused on self-awareness as well as improvement of practice.

As a form of inquiry, self-study that promotes practitioner praxis and change in relation to practice has faced many challenges. We are also challenged by our working definitions of practice, which frame our study of self in relation to practice. For example, some teachers think of curriculum as their subject matter, others their students, and others the co-construction of student-teacher *praxis*. In a classic text about curriculum, Clandinin and Connelly (1988) wrote about the *idea* of curriculum, that our perceptions of it, grounded deeply in our lived experiences, frame how we work with our students in the classroom. These notions of curriculum include what

counts as knowledge, who constructs knowledge and the purposes of education more broadly. We are also challenged by instrumental views of education that tend to deskill teachers and the notion of practice. Instead of promoting practitioner scholars who examine the scholarship of self and practice, instrumental pressures script practice by way of accountability mechanisms (Farenga, Ness, & Sawyer, 2015; Gershon, 2012). When we consider our practice, we rarely think of the creative, generative nature of our professional relationships with students and peers. Perhaps at the core of our practice lie relationships, creativity, visions for change, and, again to refer to the words of Maxine Greene, *praxis*.

A language of self-study to understand this complex process has been elusive. One of the leading challenges in the history of self-study has been to find a form of inquiry that is as rich as the worlds of practice being studied. It is partly this mismatch between the complexity of curriculum and practice and our frequently more limited ways to examine that practice that motivate educators to examine their practice through the experience of duoethnography. As a self-study methodology, duoethnography differs in key ways from some of its self-study predecessors. Perhaps the central distinction is that duoethnographers examine their practice from within it—but through the eyes of one distant to it—to provide a new and destabilizing lens. It is done with at least two practitioners working together in tandem in a dialogic format which emphasizes differences in perception between these inquirers. In it, inquirers examine not just the present situation, but also their past personal history leading to the present, as well as the critical genealogies of beliefs and discourses within their family and early situation that have "scripted" their actions. As a deeply emic form of inquiry, duoethnography is embodied and relational, thus promoting praxis. Embodying inquiry, duoethnographers examine themselves in relation to their curricular topic in ways as complex as the curriculum itself (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012; Sawyer & Norris, 2013).

In this book we present duoethnographies of practice, self-studies that are both a form of practice and a way to deconstruct and reconceptualize that practice.

A Brief History of Duoethnography

Duoethnography was born in curriculum theory. Its "first generation" practitioners were all curriculum theorists who would meet in the early years of the twenty-first century at leading curriculum theory conferences in

Canada and the United States. These scholars started working with duoethnography to examine self as and in relation to curriculum (Sawyer & Norris, 2015). One of the central questions that formed a subtext to our work was the relationship between the individual/collective self and forms of institutional practice (e.g. masters and doctoral programs in education, counseling, nursing, drama, and communications). Working ourselves as complex practitioners, we sought to examine how forms of inquiry themselves could deepen, problematize, reinforce, and expand our perception of and engagement with our practice.

In keeping with the desire to avoid being overly prescriptive and encouraging each set of duoethnographers to develop their own styles (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 18), in this volume we provide a range of studies that adhere to, ignore and/or extend duoethnography's initial tenets. Some are polyvocal conversation of present concerns more than a looking back for traces of beliefs and practices, adhering partially to currere (Pinar, 1975); others are more abstract with concrete stories that tell more than show. One uses a "teacher-in-role" technique, (Wagner, 1984) with conversations with a long deceased philosopher; another uses a screenplay format, and a ~~strike through~~ is used in yet another to demonstrate a series of decisions. Collectively, they provide an emerging chapter in duoethnography, demonstrating how each team of researchers make it their own.

The duoethnographies also provide a range of topics across disciplines (education, counseling, nursing, drama, and communications) and forms of practice—that is, duoethnographies on our curriculums of practice. What we mean by the curriculum of practice is the life text of our engagement with our practice. As text, we examine our lived experiences and histories for the discourses that have shaped our views, the discourses that act as ghost writers for our thoughts and interactions.

There is also an overlap in topics with this book's companion piece, *Theorizing Curriculum Studies, Teacher Education and Research through Duoethnography* (Norris & Sawyer, 2016). Some notes from that book could have been placed here and vice versa as most, in a broader sense, focus on our educational system. Some are more duoethnographic in nature and others focus on the pedagogy of duoethnography. All, however, promote dialogic relationships between teachers and students and writers and readers, making the two collections examples of democratic ways of being with others.

As a form of self-study, duoethnography provides a particular lens for us to explore our practice. Based on deep dialogues between two to three

individuals with differing perspectives on a particular topic or construct, duoethnography has been used by a range of researchers to explore how we are situated in relation to practice and curriculum. These studies have explored the beliefs that underscore our perspectives and actions in relation to specific forms of practice.

An Example of a Duoethnography of Practice

Given that practice itself is a contingent and emergent process whose level of abstraction in discussion only rises with association with duoethnography, writing about duoethnographies of practice is challenging. Before discussing the theory undergirding the use of duoethnography in a class or academic program, a couple of concrete examples of how it has been used as a means of self-study might be helpful. One example may be found with Sean Wiebe's use of duoethnography in a pre-service teacher preparation program. Wiebe (S. Wiebe, personal communication, July 9, 2015) integrated a duoethnography project into a course called Integrated Foundations. His goal was to have his students, who were preparing to become teachers, engage in duoethnographic dialogic self-studies in relation to an educational topic of personal meaning. As Wiebe (2015) stated, "the *Integrated Foundations* course is to help preservice teachers sort of re-understand themselves in the kinds of cultural appropriation that they bring to who they are and what they do in teaching." His goal was for students to begin to develop a new sense of reflection about other students, one built on knowing each other and then self through the concept of difference. He gave his pre-service students a duoethnography project in which they were to examine self and other as "life text," as the site of research, not the topic. The goal was for the students to create a reconceptualization of their views not by constructing a new coherent narrative emphasizing the similarities between their two stories, but rather by writing a narrative that explores the difference in the two perspectives:

> This is particularly deliberate, especially in PEI [Prince Edward Island], because there is a sense of insider/outsiderness […] where the common stories is, "We are a friendly place, we all get along, we all sort of know one another" … and that sense of how the "we" is constructed is very interesting, and they have embraced an idea of whiteness, where whiteness becomes the story rather than the difference of what has formed who they are.

For the last part of their assignment, the students needed to be creative in the representation of their insights and present new ways of knowing from their writing and conversations in an aesthetic way. To scaffold this part of the assignment, Wiebe gave his students philosophical writings on *theoria*, *praxis*, and *poesis*. In this process, he encouraged them to make personal connections, to explore "how this experience changes that knowing/doing), how they might understand what it means to be a teacher—the act of doing teaching–where knowing, doing, and making come together." It is clear that he intended that this assignment not be another one asking his students to reflect on some issue in teaching, one that had the potential to become counterproductive and lead to a hardening and reification of beliefs and biases in a collectively reinforced classroom setting.

Wiebe's course is one example of duoethnographies being facilitated or conduced by a very active international group of educators creating intersections between self-inquiry and curriculum construction. Often, these uses of duoethnography are part of a particular course and encourage students, as he described, to study themselves. But educators also engage in duoethnographies for self-study in relation to a range of forms and fields of practice. For example, Satoshi Toyosaki and Greg Hummel (2015), a communications professor and a doctoral student respectively, engaged in a duoethnography on the topic of whiteness, a construct they have also been studying in a more theoretical way in courses taught by Toyosaki and in research they conduct. In their duoethnography, they examined how a dialogic and reflexive from of inquiry provided a means not only for a study of the topic of whiteness, but also the grounds for personal reflexivity in the course of the inquiry. One exchange in their study underscores the dynamic of *praxis* found in a duoethnography:

> Hummel: I tend to move between the two opposite ends of a continuum—an unaware white and a "good" white. The dynamic middle filled with failures, sadness, misunderstandings, and so on is a dialogic space. I need to be dialogical and responsive in order to let your stories and difficult questions be part of who I am and, more importantly, who I can become. After all, this is a life-long journey to become more human. (Hummel & Toyosaki, 2015, p. 37)

> Toyosaki: Paying attention to the complexity and particularly of culture with nuance? The last time and this time are the same but different. I need to be more reflexive of my own cognitive processes that make the different events the same in constructing someone as "so white." (Hummel & Toyosaki, 2015, p. 40)

As can be seen in the above quote, duoethnographies are embodied self-studies.

The Ontology of Duoethnography

As embodied and lived curriculum, duoethnography builds on Bill Pinar's (1975) concept of currere, "understanding self." Currere is a critical form of autobiography and curriculum studies that examines the curriculum of everyday life. Pinar defines currere as regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical that is "temporal and conceptual in nature, and it aims for the cultivation of a developmental point of view that hints at the transtemporal and transconceptual" (1994, p. 19). It is a means of re-examining the construction and socialization of one's present beliefs and behaviors through a historical lens. As an early curriculum theory concept, an individual examines her/his curriculum of a phenomenon (e.g. beauty, race, health, sexuality, excellence). As a contribution to contemporary curriculum theory, duoethnography explores the contingent and relational nature in which meaning/knowledge is constructed. By regarding one's life as a curriculum, one can reconceptualize oneself. Building upon Levinas' (1984) concept of the Other and Bakhtin's (1981) comments on dialogism, an additional lens is employed. One invites the other to assist in the reconceptualization of perceptions of self and society, making all duoethnographies pedagogic.

The "developmental point of view" in an educator that Pinar suggests as being central to currere also pertains to duoethnography. Referring back to Clandinin and Connelly's insight into understanding how the *idea* of curriculum impacts how one will experience it is an important distinction for duoethnography as well as for curriculum. Duoethnographies are about the *idea* and the epistemology of the self-study. But, equally important, duoethnography is about the ontology and the lived experience of that study. Duoethnographers create a generative force located in in-between spaces of engagement. These are the spaces generated by

dialogic encounters. They exist not only between self and other, but also between a range of discourses and dialogic situations found within multitextual interplays (such as self/art, personal narrative/meta narrative, the present/the past/the future). Aoki discusses this sense of "self/other" in relation to curriculum as "one that intertwines the self as subject and the other as subjectivity—an intersubjectivity, which, in the hermeneutic language of Hans Georg Gademer understands it as a fusion of horizons, an intersubjectivity interfused into a 'we'" (Aoki, 1993, p. 265). It is the "improvised line of movement growing from the middle of … conversation" (Aoki, 1993, p. 268).

Duoethnography is a lived curriculum of multiplicity generated by the crisscrossing of multiple stories (and lives). Multiplicity is generated within duoethnography's dialogic spaces. According to Aoki (1993), multiplicity is engendered in the spaces that lie between people, in the dialogues we create. He cites Deleuze (1988): "In a multiplicity what counts are not … the elements, but what there is between, the between, a site of relations which are not separate from each other. Every multiplicity grows in the middle" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 21, as cited by Aoki, 1993, p. 260).

In duoethnography, spaces of multiplicity are generated by recognizing the differences—not the similarities—in these dialogues. In all duoethnographies, the notion of difference is made explicit. On a textual level, this is done by writing in script format. Instead of creating a shared or communal voice, duoethnographers intentionally highlight their different voices to promote a multiplicity of perspective that runs through the core of an inquiry. Duoethnographers have experimented with the use of difference as a lens for self-interrogation in their inquiries in a range of different ways. For example, Lida Dekker and Melody Rasmor (in this volume) in their duoethnography of an artistic curricular identity, encouraged each other to offer interpretations of key moments of each other's lives. Each then used their partner's interpretation as a means to revisit their own interpretation of a key life event. Dekker, in this volume, described this insight in this manner:

> So, for me, to have Melody look at me and my life, and see things that I had not ever seen, even though I had been deeply reflective in my whole existence, but she could say—Oh, I kind of see it this way. Like she would have a completely different interpretation of my experience and it made me realize that there was a different interpretation beside my own that could very well have been my experience. I mean, there was the experience—what

> had happened to me, but that experience was only in my mind through my interpretation of it and if I could accept someone else's interpretation of it, it suddenly becomes a totally different experience.

Rick Sawyer and Tonda Liggett (2012) in their duoethnography on postcolonialism examined their own identities through each other's positionalities, their differently gendered notion of the same. For instance, Sawyer, writing about an assignment he gave high school students, wrote,

> And the other piece that is now hitting me so strongly […] is the way that I have not recognized gender in anyway in this assignment. It is as if in my mind the assignment is gender neutral. But nothing is gender neutral. By not recognizing it within the assignment, I am actually defaulting to a normalized view of gender within the curriculum, which is a colonial view of it. (Sawyer & Liggett, 2012, p. 641)

The challenge of, and value within, a duoethnography is for the inquirer to begin to (re)story his self interpretation in the face of the Other (Levenis, 1984).

The Emerging Scholarship of Practice in Duoethnography

As we mentioned earlier, part of the challenge of engaging in the study of the scholarship of practice is the lack of an inquiry language capable of exploring the deeply personal and relational aspects of curriculum and practice. When we recognize curriculum as experience generated by dialogic, temporal, emergent, and relational interaction, its study then becomes part of the curricular process.

The way the inquirer is situated within this curricular process in relation to his/her topic of inquiry creates a developmental tension within the duoethnography. Duoethnographers both create and live within their inquiries as they examine them as curricular text. As a form of inquiry, duoethnography provides a platform for embodied inquiry that promotes a reconceptualization of practice. Duoethnographers weave a new curricular text with many threads. These threads include their personal stories as well as the reconceptualization of them, their perceptions of a discipline and knowledge as well as the representation of that knowledge, often in book form, their diverse ways of understanding, engaging, and imagining

knowledge, and their construction of that knowledge as dialogic and dynamic text.

The topics and questions about curriculum and practice examined by the duoethnographers in this volume were deeply personal and are offered to the reader for a personal response. Three of the studies in this volume focus on classroom curriculum. Drawing from Derrida (Derrida, 1991, 1994; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000), E. Lisa Panayotidis and Carolyn Bjartveit framed their duoethnography around questions about the co-creation of pedagogy that deepens students' (and instructors') capacity to imagine and become conscious of "ghosts in the curriculum." These ghosts are discourses running from the historical past into their current perceptions of education. In the next study, Olenka Bilash and Joe Norris explored "mutualism" in their curriculum, the process by which teachers and students co-construct equity pedagogy. As they did so, they were moved to use different cultural frames to examine their practice. The third duoethnography about classroom curriculum is by Melody Rasmor, Lida Dekker, and Richard Sawyer. Constructing a duoethnography within a duoethnography, they examined questions about their use of arts based pedagogies in their teaching. They examined their arts based practices as well as perceived personal/institutional supports and hindrances to such practices. Three duoethnographies explored questions about practice on a university level. With the Raymond Carver short story "What We Talk about When We Talk about Love" as backdrop, Susan R. Adams and Robert J. Helfenbein examined the conversations between a dissertation director and his doctoral candidate. Taking a very different approach, Callie Spencer and Karen Paisley explored the currere of their student/professor relationship. Presenting their inquiry as a screenplay in three acts, they foregrounded the question of performativity (Butler 1990, 1991). Their screenplay as performance for me, a reader, deepened conversations about *engaging in reflexivity* and *performing representation*. Aaron Bodle and Douglas Loveless head into new territory as they examine the relationship between a curriculum of displacement and their new roles as university professors. The last study in this volume is by Stefanie Sebok and Judy Woods. Contrasting slightly different generational frames and disciplines, they examine questions about a curriculum of professionalism in their respective fields of nursing and counseling.

The use of declarative statements to describe an unfolding and relational methodology can be problematic. However, it might be safe to say that these inquiries were fluid and emergent. As embodied inquiries, they did

not yield certainty and definite findings. Rather, as they engaged in them, the duoethnographers both reconceptualized their perceptions of practice as they engaged in new ways of working together and being professional.

Conclusion

It's easy to think of curriculum as packaged and practice as instrumental: we teach the curriculum and follow our job descriptions. We make checklists for tasks as we upload, download, and unload. But to engage in the scholarship of self-in-practice and practice-in-self is to draw from a much richer tradition of scholarship that examines mythopoesis, identity, embodiment, contingency, diversity, and, in the words of Janet Miller (2011), the "ethics of self-accountability."

We also engage in this work to contribute to a new scholarship that challenges neoliberal framings of acceptable—even possible—ways of practicing. Practitioners working with duoethnography do so to develop—with their students and their peers—a response to this profound crisis of imagination, meaning, and democracy we are facing. Working collaboratively, dialogically, and trans-temporally, these scholars engage in a collective response that critiques normativity and marketplace morality and grows from the acceptance of difference. Examining the relationship of self to practice through this lens, educators simultaneously engage in a form of embodied curriculum and a generative inquiry lens onto the same.

The curriculum theorists whose work is presented in this volume present ways to resist constricted views of humanity and the degradation of the human voice. For curriculum theorists, their field of study offers a pedagogy of hope within a vast societal context of inequity. This pedagogy of hope springs from contingent, dialogic, destabilizing, relational and enlightening ways of knowing and being. To refer again to the words of Maxine Greene (1971), this hope lies within our *praxis*, humanity, and collective responses in a dangerous world.

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